NUMB. XIV.

The Prompter.

To be Continued TUESDAYS and FRIDAYS.

While ITALY's voic'd Shades, *Her tuneful* Ninnies,
Sell Six cheap *Songs*, *for* Sixteen hundred Guineas!
See! Britain's FAIR, *diſſolv'd*, *in* taſteful Wonder,
Die, *with the* Notes, *and loſe all* Senſe *of* PLUNDER.
So, *through the* May-dreſs'd *Mead*, *the* BEE, *felonious*,
Hums, *o'er the riſing* Flowers, *and* robs, Harmonious:
While Each Fair Bubble *ſmiles*, *beneath his* Clinging;
Glows, *for a Week*: *And* withers, *even in* ſpringing.

Merlin's Prophecies.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 27. 1734.

THERE is a *Prompter*, of *Athletick* Abilities, commonly known in the *Fields* of *Mars*, about this City, under the Military Title of CAPTAIN VINEGAR; whoſe Task it is, to *clear* the *Ring*, from *Trumpery*, in order to make way for Entrance of thoſe Patriot *Champions*, who *devote* their *Heads*, in *Combat*, to the Publick *Renown* of their Country.

HOLDING in Reverence this uſeful Office of my *Rival*, I ſhall preſume to imitate him, at an humble Diſtance. — I therefore enter, in this Paper, with a Flouriſh of my *Cenſorial Cudgel*, to drive off, from the polluted *Circus*, that Cowardly *Impediment* called OPERA, againſt the expected Appearance of approaching *Back-ſword*, and *Quarter-ſtaff*.

NOTWITHSTANDING the Preſumption of thoſe Malepert *French* Dappers in the *Hay-market*, who have not bluſhed to Ridicule (in *England*, and under an *Engliſh* Character, call'd ROAST BEEF,) the *Nerves*, and *Genius*, of our Country, I muſt be bold to inform thoſe Comic Satyriſts, that their Countrymen have felt the *Effects* of ſuch *ſound Diet*, in ſome of the ſaddeſt, and moſt ſerious *Tragedies*, that ever were acted in their Nation. — And, truly, ſince the BODIES of Men are Robuſter, and more *Capable*, from a *ſolid*, than a *flaſhy* Diet, I ſhou'd be glad of any good Reaſon, if their *Harlequin* can give it me, *why* the MIND ſhou'd not *languiſh*, under the pitiful, thin Regimen of OPERA; and, on the Contrary, grow *ſtronger*, and more *martial*, when it feeds upon *ſubſtantial* Nouriſhment.

WHAT was it, but a *Senſe* of this unheeded Truth, that diſtorted the Muſcles of a Late Eminent *Critick*, into Agony, upon the very *Sound* of the Word *Opera*? — Tho', it was true enough, as a *Wit*, who wants no *Spleen*, expreſs'd it, that, upon ſuch Occaſions,

> Appius, *wou'd* redden, *at Each Word you* ſpoke,
> *And* ſtare tremendous, *with a* threat'ning Eye,
> *Like ſome* fierce Tyrant, *in* old Tapeſtry!

YET, it cou'd never be ſaid, that He had not *Reaſon* for the *worſt* of his *Faces*; and I am more miſtaken, than I think I am, if it wou'd not make Any Body *ſtare*, as tremendouſly as a Critick, to ſee the *Women*, of a Nation, where People pretend to value themſelves upon their BRAVERY, *ſtopping* their *Ears* at the Sound of a *Trumpet*, and ſhrieking out, *Oh hideous!* at the Noiſe of a *Drum*, as I have often, with Horror, obſerv'd 'em to do, when thoſe exciting and heroic *Notes* have been introduc'd, to *inſpirit* an *Opera*.

SEVERAL *ſober Midwives* have remarked, with Aſtoniſhment, that the *Impreſſions* of *Men*, in this Iſland, ſeem of late to be ſtamp'd in *Little*---- Our Maſſy old-faſhioned *Folios* in Calve's Leather, are reduced to neat *Pocket Volumes*; and we can peruſe nothing above *Twelves*, or *Octavo*.

BUT, for my Part, if I wonder at any Thing, it is, that *This* Change ſhould be *wonder'd at*: It being no more than a *natural Conſequence*.—The Ladies go to Bed with their Heads full of *Semiquavers*, *Eight or Ten Times divided*, and what *Fruit* they *conceive*, under Influence of this *muſical mine'd-meat*, is the *fribbling Effect* of Ideas, ſo *broke*, and *unbodied*.

I TAKE this publick Opportunity to beg Pardon of a celebrated *Actreſs*, who begins the Tragedy of the *Mourning Bride*, with this extraordinary *Encomium* on the Power of *Muſick*.

> *Mu--u--ſick has Cha-a-a-rms, to ſo-o-o-th a ſavage Breaſt,*
> *To ſo-o-often Rocks, or be-e-end the* Knotted Oak

I MUST confeſs, I was under the Miſtake of ſuppoſing this Lady *affected*, when I heard her *whining* out good Verſes, in a *Drawl* ſo unpleaſingly extended: Little dreamt I, all the while, that ſhe was *topping* her *Character*, and deriving her Ideas of *Muſick*, from the faſhionable Preſent State of the *Art*, as it *flouriſhes* under Royal Encouragement. —Thus, the Benefits of *Protected Excellence* are naturally *Spreading*, and *Productive*.—Yet, one Thing I cannot chuſe but *lament*, becauſe it ſavours a little

little of *Ingratitude*, a *Note* too *unſocial*, for Harmony!—Mr. THOMAS D'URFEY, of *ſtammering* Memory, was among the Earlieſt *Improvers* of *Muſick*, on the modern Plan of *Double-Duplicate-Semiquavers*: And, tho' his Enemies pretend that It was to a natural *Defect* in his *Organs*, he ow'd the Beauties of his Diſcovery, yet ought he by no means to have been robb'd of his Merit, for he was confeſſedly *better gifted* even than *Farinello*, himſelf, or any *tuneable Machine*, of his Tribe, in this new and ſurprizing Art, of STUTTERING in *Muſick*.

SOME chaſte *Inſipids* there are, to whom any thing *Egregious*, and *Exceſſive*, appears *unartful* and *Extravagant*.—Alas! were our *Belles*, in this free Iſland, *coldly regularly* enough to *confine* their *Paſſions*, ſomething might be ſaid, in Support of *Limited Luxuriance*, — To Perſons of ſuch *contracted Expectations*, Perfection might ſeem plac'd in *Proportion*, and *Propriety*. — One of theſe *tame Thinkers* would no longer be ſatisfied with *Elevation*, than while it carried with it *Emotion*. — She would give no Quarter to *Diviſion*, whereever it *ran out*, like a *Tail*, and made a *Beaſt* of the Reſt of the *Body*. The moſt tunefully *protruded Wrigglings*, of a never-ending *Diſtention*, wou'd, by ſuch an over-nice *Simplicity*, as Hers, be thought the Vanity of a *Eunuch's Malice*, to put Muſick *out* of *Joint*, and deſtroy the *Strength* of a manly Compoſure —The Eye of one of theſe *cold* Cenſurers would receive *Fright* from the Singer's *wide Mouths*, and the quavering convulſed *Diſtortion* of their Faces, while they are *in Labour* of a *long-winded* CLOSE: But her *Ear* would be incapable of *Attention*: For, Her corrupted Country Taſte, which has ſo often been *lull'd* by the *whiſtling* of a *Storm*, would compoſe her Spirits to *Sleep*, under the *Ragings* of one of theſe *Muſical Whirlwinds*.—Whereas the *cultivated Reliſh* of an Elegant COURT LADY, diſcerning Objects enough, within and about her, to entertain her Reflection with Images ariſing from *Herſelf*, finds no Occaſion at all for impertinent *Meaning* in the *Airs*.—It is enough, there is *Rapture* in the *Sound*—ſhe can apply it to a thouſand Charming and Extenſive Ideas, of her *own*: No matter for the *Exorbitance* of the *Quaver*—The *Length* of any thing ſhe *likes*, is what ſhe has by no means an Exception to—Let it but *decline*, and *renew* itſelf—be *loſt* and *recover'd* a dozen Times over, and the longer it is, the Better— *Ah Gad!* ſhe *faints!* ſhe *dies!* — It is *irreſiſtible!* It is a *Pleaſure*, too great to be *ſupported*!

All this would be tolerable, were *Singing* as natural as *Loving*; but, if once our Women degenerate into the Whim of Encouraging no *Motions*, but *muſical* ones, what a provoking Mortification will That be, to ſuch a *heavy-ear'd* Fellow as I am.—A *Quondam* Tarpawlin Admiral, of my Acquaintance, was us'd to pity the brave *Boatſwains* of his Majeſty's *victorious* Navy, when, dying nobly, in their Calling, yet with Voices too *hoarſe* for *Hallelujas*, they were likely, he thought, to make *ſillier* Figures in the *new* World they were going to, than they had *formerly made*, in their *old one*.—It is much the ſame Caſe, with Regard to *Love's Paradiſe*: No Part of it, that is in the Keeping of theſe faſhionable *Opera Ladies*, ought to be enter'd, by any Body but *Eunuchs*.—Let them contemplate, and enjoy, *Each other*.

A FEW young Fellows of good Senſe, who wear the Chains of theſe *Angelical Choiriſters* complain, that a Woman's Examination into the Merits of her Lover goes no farther than from his *Foot*, to his Forehead,—that his *Body* engroſſing her Regard or Diſlike, his *Soul* is conſidered as an *Appendix*, and almoſt *overlook'd*, in the Rating.—Tho' the Accuſation I am afraid is *juſt*, yet the Accus'd are all *Innocent*. Is it not the Buſineſs of the *Stage*, to *inſtruct*? —They have learnt *this Improvement*, from OPERA. —What the *Soul* is to *Man*, the *Senſe* is, to *Muſick*.—Let it be prov'd by the Complainer, that his *Mind* was diſregarded, by any *one Lady*, whom he ever heard obſerve of an Opera, that the Senſe was too *ſhort*, for the *Notes*, and I hereby indulge him free Licence, to ſit within three Benches of the Party, the next Time *Farinello* ſings, and pretend himſelf ſo Loſt, in the *Charms* of the *Muſick*, as to remain quite inſenſible, that his *Miſtreſs* has *any*.

AN Honeſt Man wou'd do Every thing in his Power, for the *Eaſe* of an Art, that is become ſo refin'd, and ſo Popular. Since, therefore, the WORDS, in our *Opera's*, are not only *ſilly*, but *unneceſſary*, and an Incumbrance upon the *Scale* of the *Compoſer*, Who, poor Man! is compell'd to labour, with inconceivable Science, to *cover* and *expunge*, *Articulation*, and blot out all troubleſome *Diſtinction* of *Purpoſe*; I wou'd recommend this lively Expedient, for Relief of the Artiſt himſelf, and for Delight of his *Feminine* Audience, that it ſhou'd be Lawful to uſe but ONE SINGLE WORD, throughout the whole three Acts of an *Opera*; and, that all thoſe Varieties of Sounds, now diffus'd among Thouſands of Phraſes, ſhou'd unite themſelves, like Beams in a Burning-Glaſs, upon this *Centrical Point* of *Expreſſion*.

THE Chief Difficulty, to be apprehended in Eſtabliſhing ſo deſirable an Improvement, muſt ariſe from the *Choice* of a Word, that will be univerſally acknowledged ſo conſiderable, as to deſerve the Diſtinction. — The *Alphabet* was not put into more Confuſion by *Voiture*, upon Diſpute of the *Letters*, about *Neuf Germain*, than the *Dictionary* will be thrown under, at Election of a *Word*, which has *Weight* enough to maintain this Dignity. Our *Politicians* will vote hard for LIBERTY; a'l, but that It is a Word, that has little, or no *Meaning*, there cou'd *no fitter* be choſen; It being PLIABLE, beyond all *Compariſon*; and capable of Every Degree of *Diſtention*, *Ductility*, and *Circumflexion*.

TO the LADIES, at laſt, we muſt refer ourſelves, for a *Candidate*, of ſo comprehenſive an Energy; and *They* will certainly *return* us QUADRILLE. — The very Sound is *coercive!* and we receive it with Reſpect, and Obedience.

THAT it is COMPREHENSIVE, can never be queſtion'd: It has *Four Sides*, in its *Figure*, and the *Mathematicians* will inſtruct us, that *ſuch* is the *Form*, beyond all other, *Capacious*. Then, It *takes in* the *whole Sex*: So that it poſſeſſes *This* Quality, beyond all manner of Controverſy. —

It has HARMONY, to ſo alluring a Degree, that our moſt devoted Lovers of *Muſick* are ſeldom *in Tune*, but, while under its Influence.

IT is SONOROUS: For it can be *Heard*, from the *Top* of a Houſe, to the Bottom.

IT is qualified for STIRRING THE PASSIONS, (I mean the *maſculine* Paſſions) beyond TRAGEDY *itſelf*: For it *provokes*, *inflames*, *tranſports*, and *kindles up* the *Soul*, to a Degree of *Horror*, and *Conflagration!*

IT is *Reſolvable* into PARTITIONS, without Number, or End. — Not a *Corpuſcle*, or *Atom*, in any one of its *Letters*, but may be *analized* into DIVISIONS, and SUBDIVISIONS, ſufficient to *break the Wind* of all the *Eunuchs* in *Europe*.

IT is MELTING too, and *fluxile*, as *Mercury*: For it *diſſolves* GOLD, more powerfully than the *Chymical Water*.

AND, laſtly, It has this particular Qualification, which *appropriates* it to the *Uſe* we deſign it for, that it may be DWELT ON for ever, with ſtill *new Pleaſure*; and ſeems incapable of becoming *Tireſome*, either to the *Ear*, or the *Imagination*.

IF any Good Chriſtian can give Notice of a *Word*, more *properly adapted*, than *Quadrille*, let him tranſlate it into *Italian*, and convey it to the Lord Chamberlain's Office, and He ſhall receive its *full Value*, out of the *Overplus* of *Mr. Handel's Subſcription*; It being peculiar to the *Good Fortune* of this Gentleman, that He is to contribute, his Aſſiſtance, toward Entertainments, which his *Enemies* are *paid for*.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

Printed for T. COOPER, at the *Globe* in *Pater noſter Row*: Where Letters to the AUTHOR are taken in. And where the former Numbers may be had.

[*Price Two-Pence.*]